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# United States Department of Agriculture

## PRODUCTION AND MARKETING ADMINISTRATION

### SERVICE AND REGULATORY ANNOUNCEMENTS No. 113<sup>1</sup>

## OFFICIAL UNITED STATES STANDARDS FOR GRADES OF VEALERS AND SLAUGHTER CALVES

(Title 7, Ch. I, Pt. 53, Sections 53.120–53.124 of the Code of Federal Regulations)

The following is a reprint of the official United States standards for the grades of vealers and slaughter calves heretofore promulgated by the Secretary of Agriculture under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (60 Stat. 1087; 7 U. S. C. 1621 et seq.) and the item for Market Inspection of Farm Products and Marketing Farm Products recurring in the annual appropriation acts for the Department of Agriculture. The standards are reprinted with amendment effective March 10, 1951.

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDARDS

The official United States standards for grades of vealers and slaughter calves were initially promulgated on July 16, 1928.

The official standards were amended in March 1951. The amendment specified the minimum requirements for each grade and provided for the renaming of certain grades of vealers and calves to conform with the amended standards for veal and calf carcasses which became effective at the same time. Major changes brought about by this amendment were as follows: The Prime and Choice grades were combined and redesignated Prime, the Good grade was renamed Choice, the top half of the Medium grade was renamed Good, the remaining portion of the Medium grade was designated Commercial, and the Common grade was renamed Utility. The Cull grade remained unchanged. Other minor changes were made to facilitate interpretation.

### DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN VEALERS AND CALVES

Young bovine animals are segregated for market purposes as vealers or calves. The basis for differentiation between vealers and calves is made primarily on age and certain evidences of type of feeding. Typical vealers are less than 3 months of age and have subsisted largely on milk. Since vealers have consumed little, if any, roughages, they have the characteristic trimness of middle associated with limited paunch development. Calves are usually between 3 and 8 months of age, have subsisted partially or entirely on feeds other than milk for a substantial period of time, and have developed the heavier middles and physical characteristics associated with maturity beyond the vealer stage.

### CLASSES OF VEALERS AND CALVES

There are three classes of vealers and calves, based on sex condition—steers, heifers, and bulls. However, the influence of sex condition on physical characteristics is not sufficient to merit separate grade standards for each class.

### APPLICATION OF STANDARDS

Vealers and calves are graded largely on a composite evaluation of three general factors—conformation, finish, and quality. Conformation refers to the general body proportions of the animal and to the ratio of meat to bone. While

<sup>1</sup>This publication was issued originally as Service and Regulatory Announcements No. 113 of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The work on which it is based is now a part of the Production and Marketing Administration.



primarily determined by the inherent muscular and skeletal system, it is also influenced by degree of fatness. Finish refers to the fatness of the animal. The quality, quantity, and distribution of finish are all closely associated with the palatability and quality of the meat. Quality in the slaughter animal refers to the refinement of hair, hide, and bone and to the smoothness and symmetry of the body. Quality is also closely associated with carcass yield and the proportion of meat to bone.

The determination of the carcass grade that the live animal will produce requires the exercising of well-regulated judgment. Each animal presents a different combination of the grade determining factors. It is not unusual to find an animal of one grade that has some of the characteristics associated with another grade or grades. Therefore, a composite evaluation of the total inherent physical characteristics of the animal is essential for accuracy in determining grade.

The descriptions of the physical characteristics of the grades of vealers and calves represent the lower limits of each grade. No attempt is made to describe the numerous combinations of grade factors which may meet the minimum requirements for a particular grade. Descriptions are limited largely to animals considered as typical of the lower limits of the grade.

The grade descriptions of both vealers and calves apply to those of average age or maturity. In order to qualify for a specific grade, more mature animals should carry somewhat more finish, while very young animals may carry somewhat less finish than specified herein.

## **SPECIFICATIONS FOR OFFICIAL UNITED STATES STANDARDS FOR GRADES OF VEALERS**

### **PRIME**

Vealers possessing the minimum qualifications for Prime grade are superior in conformation, quality, and finish. In conformation, Prime vealers tend to be low-set, compact, short of neck and body, and relatively thick-fleshed. They are wide over the back, loin, and rump. Shoulders and hips are moderately neat and smoothly laid in. The twist is deep and full, and the rounds are thick and moderately plump. There is a slight fullness or plumpness evident over the crops, loin, and rump, which contributes to a rather well-rounded appearance. Prime vealers have a thin fat covering over the crops, back, loin, rump, and upper ribs. The brisket, rear flanks, and cod or udder show distinct evidence of fullness. Prime vealers exhibit evidences of high quality. The bones tend to be proportionately small, joints smooth, the hide moderately thin and pliable, and the body very trim, smooth, and symmetrical.

### **CHOICE**

Vealers possessing the minimum qualifications for Choice grade tend to be moderately low-set, short-necked and compact. They are slightly thick-fleshed and moderately wide over the back and loin. Shoulders and hips are usually moderately neat and smoothly laid in, with only a slight tendency toward prominence. The loin, rump, and rounds may appear almost flat, with little evidence of fullness. Choice vealers have a very thin fat covering over the back, loin, and upper ribs. The brisket, rear flanks, and cod or udder may show a very slight fullness. Choice vealers usually present a moderately refined appearance.

### **GOOD**

Vealers possessing the minimum qualifications for Good grade tend to be slightly compact and slightly wide of back and loin. The neck may be slightly long and thin. Good grade vealers tend to be slightly thin-fleshed, and the loin, rump, and rounds are flat and may present a very slight sunken or hollowed-out appearance. The shoulders and hips are slightly prominent. The fat covering is very limited and is discernible only over portions of the back and loin. The brisket, rear flanks, and cod or udder may have small fat deposits but have no apparent fullness. Good grade vealers are usually moderately smooth and slightly refined in appearance.

### **COMMERCIAL**

Vealers possessing the minimum requirements for Commercial grade tend to be rangy, upstanding, long and thin of neck, narrow over the back, loin, and rump.

and shallow in the twist. They are thin-fleshed, and there is a distinctly sunken or hollowed-out appearance over the back, loin, and rounds. Hips and shoulders appear moderately prominent. There is an extremely thin fat covering over portions of the back and loin that is difficult to detect in the live animal. Such vealers may show the heavy bones, thick hide, prominent hips and shoulders associated with coarseness, or they may show the small bones, tight hide, and angularity denoting over-refinement.

#### UTILITY

Vealers possessing the minimum requirements for the Utility grade may tend to be very rangy, angular, and long and thin of neck. They are very thinly fleshed, narrow over the back, loin, and rump, and shallow in the twist. Hips and shoulders are very prominent, and the crops, back, loin, rump, and rounds present a very sunken or hollowed-out appearance. Utility vealers show no visible evidence of any fat covering. Utility vealers tend to be of low quality. The bones and joints are usually proportionately large and the hide either thick or tight and inelastic.

#### CULL

The typical Cull grade vealer appears extremely rangy, angular, long- and thin-necked, narrow, and shallow bodied. Shoulders and hips are extremely prominent, and the crops, back, loin, rump, and rounds present an extremely sunken or hollowed-out appearance. The general appearance denotes low quality. The relative proportion of meat to bone is very low, joints appear large and coarse, and the body is very unsymmetrical.

### SPECIFICATIONS FOR OFFICIAL UNITED STATES STANDARDS FOR GRADES OF SLAUGHTER CALVES

#### PRIME

Calves possessing the minimum qualifications for Prime grade are superior in conformation, quality, and finish. In conformation, Prime calves tend to be low-set, compact, and short of neck and body and thick-fleshed. They are wide over the back, loin, and rump. Shoulders and hips are neat and smoothly laid in. The twist is deep and full and the rounds are thick and moderately plump. There is a fullness or plumpness evident over the crops, loin, and rump which contributes to a well-rounded appearance. Prime calves have a slightly thick fat covering over the crops, back, loin, rump, and upper ribs. The brisket, rear flanks, and cod or udder show a marked fullness. Prime calves exhibit evidences of high quality. The bones tend to be proportionately small, joints smooth, the hide moderately thin and pliable, and the body very trim, smooth, and symmetrical.

#### CHOICE

Calves possessing the minimum qualifications for Choice grade tend to be moderately low-set, short-necked, and compact. They tend to be moderately thick-fleshed, and are moderately wide over the back and loin. Shoulders and hips are usually moderately neat and smoothly laid in. There is a slight fullness or plumpness over the crops, loin, rump, and rounds which contribute to a rather well-rounded appearance. Choice calves have a moderately thin fat covering over the back, loin, rump, and upper ribs. The brisket, rear flanks, and cod or udder are slightly full. Choice calves usually present a moderately refined appearance.

#### GOOD

Calves possessing the minimum qualifications for Good grade tend to be slightly compact and slightly wide of back and loin. The neck may be slightly long and thin. Good grade calves tend to be only slightly thick-fleshed, and the loin, rump, and rounds may appear almost flat with little or no evidence of fullness. The shoulders and hips are usually moderately neat and smoothly laid in but may appear slightly prominent. There is a very thin fat covering over the back, loin, and upper ribs. The brisket, rear flanks, and cod or udder may show a very slight fullness. Good grade calves are usually moderately smooth and slightly refined in appearance.



**COMMERCIAL**

Calves possessing the minimum requirements for Commercial grade tend to be rangy, upstanding, long and thin of neck, narrow over the back, loin, and rump, and shallow in the twist. They tend to be thinly fleshed, and there is a slightly sunken or hollowed-out appearance over the back, loin, and rounds. Hips and shoulders appear somewhat prominent. There is a very thin fat covering that is discernible only over portions of the back and loin. Such calves may show the heavy bones, thick hide, prominent hips and shoulders associated with coarseness; or they may show the small bones, tight hide, and angularity denoting over-refinement.

**UTILITY**

Calves possessing the minimum requirements for the Utility grade tend to be very rangy, angular, and long and thin of neck. They tend to be very thinly fleshed, narrow over the back, loin, and rump, and shallow in the twist. Hips and shoulders are very prominent, and the crops, back, loin, rump, and rounds present a very sunken or hollowed-out appearance. There is an extremely thin fat covering over the back and loin that is difficult to detect in the live animal. Utility calves tend to be of low quality. The bones and joints are usually proportionately large, and the hide either thick or tight and inelastic.

**CULL**

The typical Cull grade calf appears extremely rangy, angular, long and thin-necked, narrow, and shallow-bodied. Shoulders and hips are extremely prominent, and the crops, back, loin, rump, and rounds present an extremely sunken or hollowed-out appearance. The general appearance denotes low quality. The relative proportion of meat to bone is very low, joints appear large and coarse, and the body is very unsymmetrical.

